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Pennsburg shooter. Police say Bradley Stone killed six family members and critically wounded another in a custody battle over his two daughters. The children were left with a neighbor. Stone was believed to be at large near Doylestown, Monday night. PAGE 02

MASSACRE

Police outside the home of Bradley Stone, who allegedly killed six people at three locations in Montgomery County on Monday. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

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Pennsburg shooter kills six, goes on run

Hunted. Military vet eluded law enforcement.

The military veteran who police say killed six family members and critically injured another in a shooting spree near Philadelphia on Monday was believed to have been chased off by an armed civilian after attempting to steal the man's car keys in Doylestown on Monday night.

For hours on Monday, police assumed Bradley William Stone, 35, was in his Pennsburg house at Main and W. 4th streets, according to police sources at the scene.

SWAT teams surrounded the home, demolished the garage behind the house, extinguished lights on the street and evacuated neighbors from nearby homes as they fired gas canisters and stun grenades into the small-frame home decorated with an American flag.

Around 7:30 p.m., police abandoned the home and fanned out into Philadelphia's suburbs.

The civilian had a gun and shot at the man in fatigues, who then ran into the woods, the Daily News reported.

Montgomery County District Attorney Risa Vetri Ferman said the victims were all members of Stone's wife's family. Multiple media reports said the shootings may have been tied to a custody battle.

Police in protective gear with an armored vehicle behind Stone's home in Pennsburg. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

Visit **Metro.us** to read more about the deadly incident.

Eyewitness

"This morning I heard there were murders... and then all of a sudden it's in my backyard."

Terry Place, Stone's neighbor

Press reports say Stone is a Marine Corps veteran of Iraq, where he served as a weatherman with an artillery unit.

They said he may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Stone is believed to have killed the six people at three different locations.

Police followed a "hangup" 911 call to the Lansdale home of Stone's former grandmother-in-law and mother-in-law around 4:30 a.m. Monday. Police found both women shot to death, Ferman said.

At 4:55 a.m., more than 7 miles from the Lansdale home, a neighbor alerted police to a disturbance at the apartment of Nicole Hill on the 150 block of Main Street in the Harleysville section of Lower Salford Township. Hill, Stone's 33-year-old ex-wife and the mother of his children, was found shot to death.

The DA said at 5 a.m. Stone took the couple's two daughters, ages 8 and 5, to his hometown of Pennsburg, dropping them off at a neighbor's house.

Before 8 a.m. Nicole Stone's sister, Patricia Flick, her husband and their 14-year-old daughter were found dead in their Souderton home. Their 17-year-old son was found with a bullet to his head and was airlifted in critical condition to a Philadelphia hospital.

The Souderton murders actually occurred first at 3:30 a.m.

That morning, police surrounded Stone's Pennsburg home.

Using loudspeakers, they called for him to surrender, and officers at the scene told journalists they believed Stone was in the home, possibly dead.

With nothing but silence by nightfall, officers circled the house, walked up to the front door, and pointed flashlights in the windows, while dozens of locals watched for hours from across the street.

Authorities locked down schools in the Upper Perkiomen Valley and Souderton school districts as the manhunt wore on.

The children were let go by 3:45 p.m.

The Souderton murders actually occurred first at 3:30 a.m.

"Last discovery, first in time" Ferman said.

While police recovered Stone's vehicle and personal cellphone, he is still on the loose as of press time.

SAM NEWHOUSE
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Pennsburg shooter. Marine Corps Iraq vet about whom little is known, may have PTSD

Bradley William Stone, the 35-year old veteran from Pennsburg who police say killed six relatives in a child custody dispute today, is a former military weatherman and Iraq veteran, who may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, according to reports.

ABC News said Stone was a Marine reservist from 2002 to 2011, leaving the military with the rank of sergeant. NBC10 in Philadelphia reported his military specialty was monitoring the weather to ensure the accuracy of artillery fire.

Stone lived on the same street where Colleen LaRose, also known as Jihad Jane, lived with her mother.

Stone was described by the Montgomery County DA's as 5-foot-10, weighing 195 pounds, and having a red and auburn beard and mustache with closely cropped hair.

Stone, according to the DA, is known to use a cane or walker. Authorities believe he was wearing military fatigues, either green or sand-colored.

DANNY MCDONALD

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STEADi

Northeast

Cop shoots, kills man in Mayfair

A 26-year-old man was shot and killed by police Monday morning in Mayfair, police said.

Brandon Tate-Brown, of the 5200 block of Horrocks Street, was pulled over by police at 2:45 a.m. on the 6700 block of Frankford Avenue. Police said the headlights of Brown's car, a Dodge Charger with Florida plates, were off.

Police said they spotted a handgun on the car's center console. When they asked him to get out of the car he struggled with them. During the struggle, Tate-Brown reached for the gun through the driver's-side door, police said.

One of the officer's fired, and Tate-Brown was struck in the head.

The officer who fired the gun was placed on administrative duty.

TOMMY ROWAN

Terrorist acts from Sydney to the Philadelphia suburbs

Q&A. Metro spoke to two experts on the recent violence.

Police outside the home of Bradley Stone. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

Sandro Galea is a physician and epidemiologist who studies the effects of mass violence at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

What motivates a person to carry out a mass killing?
It's very complex. But data shows that mass killings or shootings tend to happen when there are more guns available.

What can be done to stop that?
The easiest way is to get the guns off the streets. Or at least to make weapons unavailable for people.

In Sydney, a man took hostages in a cafe and it was called domestic terrorism. In Pennsylvania a man kills six family members. Is that terrorism?
The use of violence against random people, society, or the public is terrorism. Often there are political or religious aims.

What are the lessons we should be drawing out of this? Is there anything you would like to add?
We will never have a society without violence, shootings or mass killings when weapons are easily available. We need to do as much as possible to make sure that those tools are not available and people aren't able to hurt each other.

Maria Haberfeld is a professor at John Jay College in New York, and a specialist in police and terrorism issues.

What makes a person carry out a mass killing?
There's no real answer for why people start shootings or mass violence. Often they are seeking a few minutes of fame or personal gratification. Mostly it is cause-oriented — it was religiously orientated in Sydney. Mostly it's just another way of communicating their fear.

Are the media helping?
To stop mass violence or terrorism, whether it's domestic or international, the media has to stop covering it. Coverage perpetuates the goal to be known or to get a few minutes of fame. Terrorists are often not locked on a specific target. They want media coverage.

So would the Pennsylvania killings be considered terrorism?
Terrorism doesn't need to be initiated by a religious or political purpose, it just needs a purpose. Religion, politics, even private issues could define an act as terrorism. The media often call political or religion-related violent acts terrorism. "Domestic terrorism," though, isn't often called terrorism, maybe to avoid panic.

What lessons should we draw from this?
Look at history and you can see that terrorism can easily happen here in our country, at any time. And don't forget the soft targets. You should not ignore the soft targets like cafes or other public spaces. It doesn't have to be something like 9/11. You can see what happened in Sydney.

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Gayborhood builds to endure

Anniversary. Fifty years after Philadelphia hosted the first U.S. gay rights demonstrations, the Gayborhood will host a year of commemorations.

Chris Bartlett outside the William Way Community Center in Philadelphia. / MARK STEHLE

Chris Bartlett is executive director of the William Way LGBT Community Center. He spoke with Metro about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights movement.

As the year is coming to an end, how do you feel about the Gayborhood's progress and what still needs to be done?
I gave a TED talk comparing it to Chinatown. It's a cultural district that centralizes the experience of LGBT community even though LGBT people live everywhere in Philadelphia, it's where the organizations, the bars and social centers are. It's where people come to find other LGBT people. It's the expression of the regional community. If you're looking to find Chinese culture, you come to Chinatown. If you're looking to find the LGBT community, you come to the Gayborhood.

Quoted

"We are seeing a generational shift, where more people have a relative, a colleague, a close friend who is LGBT and it doesn't matter."
Bartlett

Just as they've made sure affordable housing remains in Chinatown for that community, the LGBT community must ensure there is affordable housing. We just completed the John C. Anderson affordable housing unit. It will provide 56 units for people aged 62 and up. It's built with federal funds so it's open to everyone, but it's LGBT-friendly.

Why is affordable housing so important?
These anchor institutions are key to preserving a community. Bars are important too, but you need to provide places for people to get health services, youth services, senior services — that's all equally important. You need to ensure that LGBT seniors don't have to move away. If a neighborhood is going to be successful, seniors have to be able to live there. Otherwise it becomes a Disneyland.

Does your organization have any plans for a Christmas celebration?
We have our annual holiday potluck on Christmas Day at the William Way LGBT community center. We make it a point to be open on the holidays because it's a day when many LGBT people don't have a place to go.

Is that changing now?
We are seeing a generational shift, where more people have a relative, a colleague, a close friend who is LGBT and it doesn't matter. The success of the coming out project hasn't hit the grandparents and the elder generation as much so many people still struggle on the holidays.

What are some of the major issues that your community will tackle in the New Year?
2015 is the 50th anniversary of some of the first gay rights demonstrations in the U.S. Every year from 1965 to 1969 in front of Independence Hall they held Reminder Day protests. That helped pave the way for what happened at Stonewall. We'll be holding a year of commemorations. The National Constitution Center will have its first LGBT exhibit ever, looking at the evolution of LGBT rights in the Supreme Court and in public life from 1960 to the present. We'll also be organizing exhibits at several other museums in Philadelphia.

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Rocky Horror World Records Show

On a steamy night at the Trocadero on Friday, 82 drag queens set a new world record, according to Philadelphia magazine. The group challenged the current mark in the Guinness Book of World Records set in July for the World's Largest Drag Queen Show with 55. All 82 were gathered on stage for a rendition of "The Body Electric." The club's owner sent film of the feat to Guinness to claim their prize. ALEXANDER JOHN

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Tweet. Jim Kenney not impressed with Chris Christie's allegiances

Jerry Jones (left) and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. / NBC

How 'bout them tweets!

City Councilman Jim Kenney was flabbergasted. As the Dallas Cowboys were working their way toward a win over the Eagles on Sunday night, Kenney noticed a substantial celebrity sitting in the private box of Cowboys owner Jerry Jones at Lincoln Financial Field.

So Kenney did what any fan would do. He tweeted.

"Chris Christie is sitting on his very large ass next to Jerry Jones in his box at the Linc. You suck! Kissing Texas ass for 2016. Awful!"

The 2016 reference was a nod to Christie's rumored run for the White House.

"Hey fat assed Christie, kiss Jerry Jones' ass in his box in Dallas. Not across the river from Philly," Kenney continued. "You are just a creep!"

In an interview with 1450-AM WPG Talk Radio, posted to Christie's personal YouTube channel Monday, the governor addressed Eagles fans "venomous conduct" toward his allegiance.

"I love passionate sports fans," Christie said. "I'm a passionate sports fan. And so I can't say that I was the least bit surprised by the reaction of some Eagles fans. I don't react in that way but I'm an enthusiastic Dallas Cowboys fan. "I've never made a secret of it from the time I entered public life." TOMMY ROWAN

Quoted

"Hey fat assed Christie, kiss Jerry Jones' ass in his box in Dallas. Not across the river from Philly. You are just a creep!"

Kenney, in a tweet Sunday

Roaring back to the home country

Drexel University paleontologist Kenneth Lacovara loaded up the fossil bones of the Dreadnoughtus Schrani dinosaur Monday for its journey back to Argentina. In September, Lacovara revealed the bones of the extinct dinosaur, a new species which he discovered in Argentina's Santa Cruz province. The fossil was on loan to the U.S. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER

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Police storm Sydney cafe to end hostage siege, three dead

Terror. The incident forced the evacuation of nearby buildings and sent shockwaves around the country.

Hostages run with their hands up from the Lindt Cafe in Sydney, Australia. / GETTY IMAGES

Heavily armed Australian police stormed a Sydney cafe on Tuesday and freed a number of hostages being held at gunpoint in a dramatic end to the siege.

Heavy gunfire and blasts from stun grenades filled the air shortly after 2 a.m. local time.

Moments earlier, at least six people believed to have been held captive managed to flee after gunshots were heard coming from the cafe, and police later confirmed that they made their move in response.

"They made the call because they believed at that time if they didn't enter there would have been many more lives lost," said Andrew Scipione, police commissioner for the state of New South Wales.

The operation began shortly after a police source named the gunman as Man Haron Monis, an Iranian refugee and self-styled sheikh facing multiple charges of sexual assault as well as being an accessory to murder.

He was also found guilty in 2012 of sending offensive and threatening letters to families of eight Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, as a protest against Australia's involvement in the conflict, according to local media reports.

A U.S. security official said the U.S. government was being advised by Australia that there was no sign at this stage that the gunman was connected to known terrorist organizations.

During the siege, hostages had been forced to display an Islamic flag, igniting fears of a jihadist attack. REUTERS

Quoted

"Do not let this sort of incident bring about any loss of confidence of working or visiting our city. It was the act of an individual."
Scipione

By the numbers

17
The gunman held 17 hostages when the siege began.

3
Three people were killed, two hostages and the gunman.

16
The seige lasted 16 hours.

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Tsarnaev to appear in court this week

Suspect. He faces the death penalty if convicted of the largest mass-casualty attack on U.S. soil since 9/11.

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev
METRO FILE PHOTO

Boston Marathon bombing Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is due to appear in court in Boston this week for the first time in more than a year, at a final hearing before his trial begins next month, one of his attorneys said on Monday.

Tsarnaev, 21, is charged with killing three people and injuring more than 260 with two homemade pressure-cooker bombs left at the race's crowded finish line on April 15, 2013. Three days later as Tsarnaev and his older brother, Tamerlan, attempted to flee the city, federal prosecutors contend they shot and killed a university police officer.

Tamerlan, 26, died later that night after a gun battle with police and Dzhokhar was arrested on April 19, 2013, when officers found him hiding in a dry-docked boat in a Watertown, Massachusetts backyard.

Tsarnaev has not been seen in public since July 2013, when he appeared in U.S. District Court in Boston to plead not guilty to 30 criminal counts linked to the attack.

At the time, his left arm was in a cast and his face was swollen, signs of injuries sustained during his arrest. **REUTERS**

Deaths

3

Three people died in the bombing attack: 29-year-old restaurant manager Krystle Campbell, graduate student Lingzi Lu, 23; and 8-year-old Martin Richard. MIT police officer Sean Collier, 27, was killed three days later.

AR-15 assault weapon

Newtown victims' families sue gunmaker

The families of nine people killed in a 2012 massacre at a Newtown, Connecticut, elementary school on Monday sued the maker of the gun used in the attack, saying the weapon should not have been sold because it had no reasonable civilian purpose.

While the AR-15 assault weapon used in the attack on Sandy Hook Elementary School was legally sold in Connecticut, the lawsuit contends that the weapon should not have been available to 20-year-old gunman Adam Lanza. The AR-15 is manufactured by Bushmaster, a privately held company based in Windham, Maine.

Quoted

"This is a weapon that is designed for military use, for killing as many people as efficiently as possible."

Michael Koskoff, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said in a phone interview.

The massacre sparked a fresh debate on gun rights, which are protected by the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The lawsuit, filed in Connecticut Superior Court in Bridgeport by the families of nine of the people killed and a 10th person who was wounded, seeks unspecified monetary damages. **REUTERS**

Nearly extinct

Rare white rhino dies at San Diego zoo

One of only six northern white rhinoceros left on Earth died over the weekend at a San Diego zoo, bringing the species closer to extinction, zoo officials said on Monday.

Angalifu, who was about 44 years old and being treated for age-related conditions, died on Sunday, according to the San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

The world's only known remaining northern white rhinos are an elderly female still at the Safari Park, one at a zoo in Europe and three in Africa, the California zoo said in a statement.

"Angalifu's death is a tremendous loss to all of us," Randy Rieches, curator of mammals for the zoo, said in a statement. **REUTERS**

NORTHERN WHITE RHINOCEROS /REUTERS

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Antitrust. US faces tough questions in Apple e-books appeal

A government lawyer faced tough questioning in an appeals court on Monday as he sought to defend a judge's ruling that Apple Inc., conspired with five publishers to raise e-book prices.

In arguments before the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New York, some judges appeared sympathetic to Apple's contention that it engaged in pro-competitive conduct when in 2010 it entered an e-books market largely dominated by Amazon. Amazon at the time had a 90 percent market share.

Circuit Judge Dennis Jacobs asked a Department of Justice lawyer why it was wrong for the publishers to get together to defeat a "monopolist" that was using "predatory pricing." REUTERS

Dutch watchdog

Google faces $18 million fine for Web privacy

Google could be fined up to $18.6 million if it does not stop violating the privacy of Internet users in the Netherlands, the Dutch data protection agency said on Monday.

The U.S. company is breaching the country's data protection act by using people's private information such as browsing history and location data to target them with customized ads, the Data Protection Authority said. REUTERS

California's 'Hot Drought' worst in at least 1,200 years

Heat. Higher temperatures increase evaporation and help deplete reservoirs and groundwater.

California's largest water reservoir, Lake Shasta, is at historically low levels. / GETTY IMAGES

Record rains fell in California this week. They're not enough to change the course of what scientists are now calling the region's worst drought in at least 1,200 years.

Modern measurements already showed it's been drier than the 1930s dust bowl, worse than the historic droughts of the 1970s and 1980s. New research going back further than the Viking conquests in Europe still can't find a drought as bad as this one.

To go back that far, scientists consulted one of the longest records available: tree rings. Tighter rings mean drier years, and by working with California's exceptionally old trees, researchers from University of Minnesota and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute were able to reconstruct a chronology of drought in southern and central California. They identified 37 droughts that lasted three years or more, going back to the year 800.

None were as extreme as the conditions we're seeing now.

One of the oddities of this drought is that conditions aren't just driven by a lack of rainfall. There have been plenty of droughts in the past with less precipitation. (The drought of 1527 to 1529, for example, was killer.) What makes this drought exceptional is the heat. Extreme heat.

Tensions are still running high between farmers and salmon fishers, who rely on the same waters. Young salmon even qualified for migration assistance this year — via tanker truck — when river levels were too low to make the swim. BLOOMBERG

Costly condition

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California's drought has withered pastures and forced farmers to uproot orchards and fallow farmland. It may cost the state $2.2 billion this year, with 17,100 jobs lost and 428,000 acres of land left unplanted.

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Holiday spending habits. The latest holiday trend is buying something for yourself

Jill Bascou looked like a typical holiday gift shopper standing in line on Thanksgiving Day shortly after Target opened at 6 p.m. Except she wasn't buying for other people. The 39-year-old was waiting to get herself an iPad.

Retailers call this self-gifting. Look at a major store's circular advertising holiday gifts — from the $5 toasters at Kohl's to a $279 Dyson vacuum at Target — and you'll see the top draws are items people typically buy for themselves.

Marshal Cohen, chief retail analyst at NPD Group, started tracking the trend of self-gifting six years ago, after interviewing a shopper on Black Friday at a Macy's.

The woman had a huge pile of clothes over one arm and a smaller pile on her other. Cohen was surprised to learn that woman was buying the big pile for herself.

Now 30 percent of purchases over the Thanksgiving holiday are attributed to self-gifting, Cohen says. Surveys from the National Retail Federation bear this out, showing that 77 percent of shoppers took advantage of discounts to buy for themselves over the holiday weekend.

Toys are the obvious exception, but almost everything else — the TVs, the home goods, even the clothing — are items that people are often buying for themselves.

Cohen's advice for shoppers who missed out on the early sales and are still waiting for big discounts: "Be patient and wait for the price to come to you."

Don't obsess over getting the absolute rock-bottom prices if it means delaying what you want, Cohen adds. You can always return an item.

REUTERS

By the numbers

30%

Percentage of purchases over the Thanksgiving holiday attributed to self-gifting

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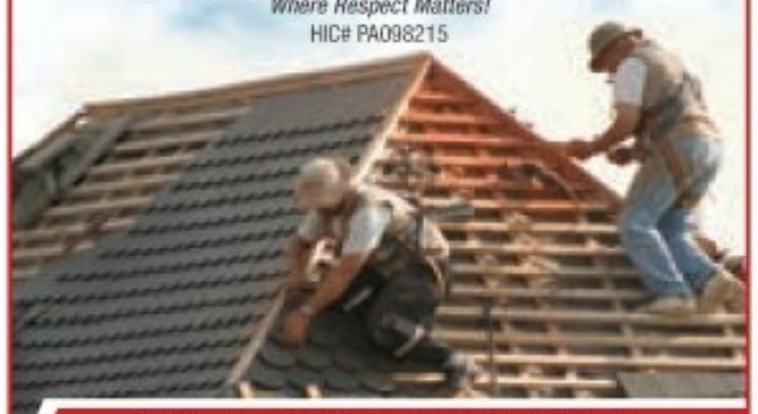

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Best and cheapest holiday gifts to give

As a multimillionaire, I'm often asked what I'll be buying my loved ones this holiday season. My answers surprise them, but they shouldn't. See the best holiday presents below; they're far cheaper and easier to get than you ever imagined.

Best Gift #1: Your Love

Giving gifts is really just an excuse to show that you care about someone. Our society idolizes material possessions, but deep down all anyone really wants is to be loved. I'm guilty of flashing my Lamborghini and luxury trips on Instagram, but while those luxuries are fun and worth working hard for, love is far easier to acquire and give. I'm not a hippie and I think the Occupy Wall Street movement is pointless, but it's good to remind ourselves of the single most valuable possession and gift in this world: love. It's free, but it's priceless.

Best Gift #2: Your Time

As my business of teaching people how to profit in the stock market has exploded, my time for friends and family has dwindled. So instead of gifting luxury goods out of guilt like I normally do, I'm doing something different this year and giving more of my time to those I care about the most. I've learned many expensive lessons in the past that material possessions just don't stack up against real conversations and experiences.

Props to Business Insider for interviewing me to talk about wealth and using the headline "Multimillionaire Trader Tim Sykes Says His Happiness Isn't About the Money."

Companies will do seemingly anything to market and hype their new products, exemplifying the lack of corporate ethics.

THINKSTOCK

Best Gift #3: Charity

It's of course great to spend time with loved ones during the holidays, but remember to think of those who are alone and have nobody. I hear sad stories every day from people, especially children, who haven't been as fortunate as I have and it's a great holiday gift to give to these people. Again, gift giving is not just about possessions and money; giving small gifts to those less fortunate can become some of the most rewarding experiences of your life. This week I'll be sponsoring a Make-A-Wish Foundation wish to help an ill child attend Miami Heat basketball games that he's always wanted, and I'll be delivering toys to nearly 100 children at the Boys & Girls Club of Miami. I encourage you to do the same in your neighborhood.

For exclusive commentary, visit **Metro.us/blogs.**

What Sykes is into this week...

1 *The U.S. stock market finally had a down week... Good. We need some consolidation after this long bull market.*

2 *My struggling New York teams, the Knicks and Giants, finally both won a game after long skids. Whew!*

GETTY IMAGES

3 *Allegations of torture will haunt the U.S. — It's time we stop this cruelty once and for all.*

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1 Lindsay Lohan vows to never return to Hollywood

She's thought long and hard about it, and Lindsay Lohan is through with Hollywood. "I won't live in LA again, hell no," she tells the Observer in a lengthy interview. "My friends tell me s— when they come over I don't want to hear. ... I love the BBC. I haven't heard myself mentioned on TV since I have been here." So there you go. The secret to keeping Lindsay Lohan away is to constantly mention her.

Also of note? Lohan seems to suggest her past issues with excessive partying weren't really her own fault but more the fault of her friends. Well, them and the paparazzi. "In LA I didn't know what to do apart from go out every night. That's when my friends were free. And I would go out and there would be all these cameras there and that's when it became difficult," she explains. "I can go for a run here on my own. I do every morning, early, and I think how my friends in New York would still be up partying at that time." Congratulations, London. She's all yours.

Lindsay Lohan is staying in London. / ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Review

D'Angelo releases surprise album

Amid rumors, R&B singer D'Angelo released a surprise album Monday at midnight, his first in 15 years.

"Black Messiah" is a timely statement. D'Angelo reflects on racial tensions in the U.S., filling tracks with layered guitars and militant drums. Elsewhere, he reverts to more sensual ballads about connection and requited love.

The album's first single, "Really Love," finds D'Angelo moaning to an object of his affection in his unmistakably soft croon. **DAN BUYANOVSKY**

THE "BLACK MESSIAH" HAS RETURNED, JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS.

2 Lisa Kudrow has some thoughts on those leaked Sony emails

Of all the reasons to be upset about Sony's leaked emails, former "Friends" star Lisa Kudrow is disappointed that the Sony execs do not understand how a life online works, more than anything else. "How come I know you don't write anything you don't want broadcast in an email? How come I know that? Who's advising [these] people?" the "Comeback" star blasted during a HuffPost Live chat. "It doesn't matter how many times [an email] says, 'This is confidential.' ... Why don't we know that there are no rules? Everything is broadcast and published." She says that now, but just wait until the contents of her Amazon wish list are made public.

THE WORD

Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.

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3 Samuel L. Jackson calls celebrities to action

Samuel L. Jackson has a new challenge for celebs who helped make the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge successful. He wants them to use their power to raise awareness for the protests happening around the country following a New York grand jury's decision not to indict a police officer in the choking death of Eric Garner. "All you celebrities out there who poured ice water on your head, here's a chance to do something else," Jackson says in a Facebook video. "I challenge all of you to sing the 'We Ain't Gonna Stop Till People are Free' song."

Daily video

A very 'Avengers' Christmas

If that "Star Trek" version of "Let it Snow" didn't really light your candle, maybe something from the Marvel universe can. The YouTuber behind the "Trek" gag, James Covenant, is back with a supercut that makes the cast of "The Avengers" sing you glad tidings for Christmas and a happy New Year. It's a bit stilted, but they're superheroes first and carolers second. And as a "Guardians of the Galaxy" bonus, Groot does his rendition of "Jingle Bells." 'Tis the season!

YOUTUBE, JAMES COVENANT

4 CULTURE

Twitter feed

Today, Iggy Azalea is admitting she has an addiction problem, Justin Bieber is maybe hanging out with the wrong crowd again, Kristin Chenoweth is making some big announcements and Diablo Cody is having trouble relating to her children.

@IGGYAZALEA: Addicted to adding ginger OR mint to every juice or tea I drink.

@justinbieber: Had fun with the homey @chrisbrown

@KChenoweth: It's official apollo13 is in my top five favorite of all time movies.

@diablocody: It's weird how so many of you have kids who are just like you. Mine are so different than me. For instance, they're outdoors right now.

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5 Buzziest books of 2014

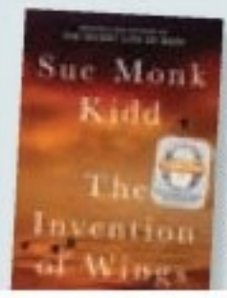
It's hard enough carving out the time to watch "The Voice" or Googling how to keep your new iPhone 6 from bending; diving into a 400-page book can seem like too much of a commitment. Lucky for you, it's our job to read all the newly released books, and we're delivering the goods that will give you enough info to fake like you've been reading all year. Here are five books that came out in 2014 that will be dominating cocktail parties and casual conversation in 2015.

EMILY LAURENCE

1 'The Invention of Wings'

by Sue Monk Kidd

Two words: Oprah-endorsed. "The Secret Life Of Bees" author Sue Monk Kidd has another best-seller on her hands with her novel about a reluctant slave owner who forms an unlikely friendship with her slave during the 1800s.

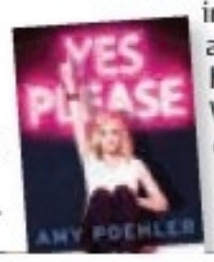


Line to drop at a party: "It totally inspired my New Year's resolution of crafting a story quilt."

2 'Yes Please'

by Amy Poehler

The "Parks and Rec" star chronicles her early days of comedy to her "Saturday Night Live" career in this memoir. She also gets real about her divorce from Will Arnett, past drug use and motherhood, among other things.

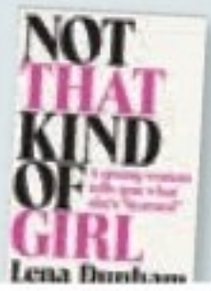


Line to drop at a party: "Amy is a classy broad. She talks about how heartbroken she was after her divorce without bashing her ex. That takes some epic restraint."

3 'Not That Kind of Girl'

by Lena Dunham

Not to be outdone, "Girls" creator and star Lena Dunham released a book of personal essays in which she talks about losing her virginity (spoiler alert: it was awkward), what it's like getting naked on camera (spoiler alert: also awkward) and how her friendships changed as she entered her 20s.

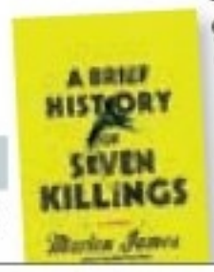


Line to drop at a party: "I wish she talked about her friendships with the 'Girls' cast more, and she only mentions Jack Antonoff twice. What gives? Maybe it's harder for her to write about what makes her happy than the things that give her extreme anxiety."

4 'A Brief History of Seven Killings'

by Marlon James

Using an attempted murder on Bob Marley as a focal point, Marlon James tells the fictional histories of the seven gunmen to expose the dangerous Jamaican climate during the '70s, '80s and '90s. Also, the 700-page tome is definitely not brief and it includes many more than seven killings. Just saying.



Line to drop at a party: "James narrates through dozens of different voices, yet it never feels disorganized or disjointed. That's what makes it genius."

5 'All The Light We Cannot See'

by Anthony Doerr

This novel has dual narratives, both taking place during World War II: One is about a blind 16-year-old girl living in France while the other follows a guy working for Hitler's side of the war, tasked with tracking down illegal radio transmissions. Their lives inevitably intercept in an anticipated, yet highly enjoyable climax.

Line to drop at a party: "The line 'open your eyes and see what you can see with them before you close them forever' changed my entire outlook on life."

Leonardo DiCaprio rubs his wealth in your face in "The Wolf of Wall Street." / PARAMOUNT PICTURES

LET'S DEBATE 'WOLF OF WALL STREET' AGAIN

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Matt Prigge's guide to what you can watch on the Internet.

MATT PRIGGE
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'The Wolf of Wall Street'

Netflix Instant

This time last year a hot debate brewed over "The Wolf of Wall Street." Was it a satire about hyper-greed and mega-hedonism or was it glamorizing them? Think pieces duked it out, some mentioning that Wall Street bros were hooting and hollering as Leonardo DiCaprio's tireless broker screwed over oblivious clients and did unprintable acts involving crack pipes and hookers' naughty bits.

Now those tussles can begin anew, as all three hours now live online. Hopefully, one can better spot the subtle ways director Martin Scorsese mocks our antiheroes, starting with how the worst punishment they get is playing tennis in a country club prison. Scorsese even denies them his beloved Rolling Stones — they get Billy Joel instead.

Hulu

THIS GUY LIKES GARLIC.
CRITERION COLLECTION

'Garlic Is as Good as Ten Mothers'

Now here's a great movie title. The Criterion Collection just released a killer box for the late Les Blank, one of the rare documentarians who focused on the great things in life instead of the bad. Case in point: his 1980 doc about garlic is simply about how great garlic is, and as such is one of the most happy-making movies ever made — along with other Blank docs, that is.

Netflix Instant

'The One I Love'

Few films go as off the rails as this tiny high-concept drama about a married (Elisabeth Moss and Mark Duplass) couple whose weekend therapy retreat takes a turn for the sci-fi. But its first two-thirds are a deep-cutting look at the difficulty of long-term relationships after the thrill of the new is long gone.

Things get weird in "The One I Love." / MAGNOLIA PICTURES

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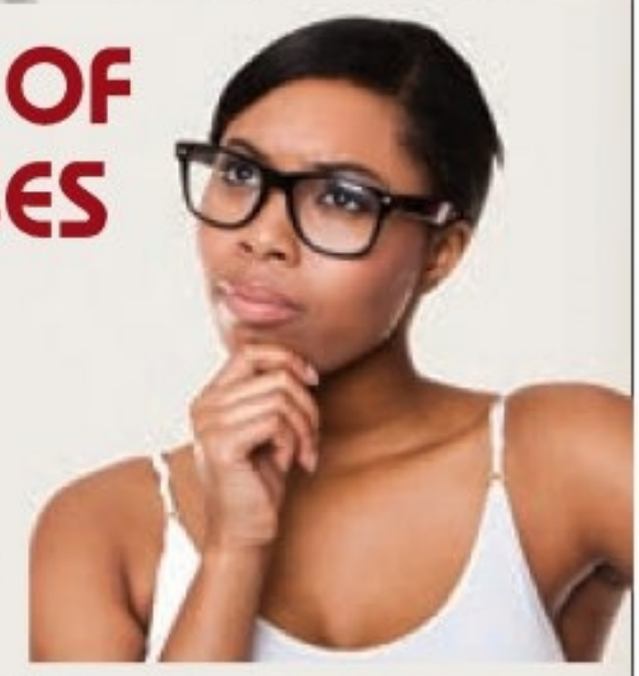

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Vine sensations Marcus Johns, left, and Cameron Dallas made the film "Expelled." / METRO

Meet two of the world's biggest Vine video stars

Video. These guys went from Vines to feature-length.

You know Vine, that video-based social network where users upload six-second clips for the world to enjoy? Well, you might not have noticed, but it's become hugely popular. In fact, two of its biggest stars, Cameron Dallas and Marcus Johns, have done so well that they're now looking to parlay that success into their first feature film, "Expelled." Dallas and Johns are hoping that their combined 11.9 million Vine followers — yes, you read that right — will come along for the ride. But that doesn't mean they've given up on the format that launched them in the first place.

"It's really short and punchy, for people that don't have long attention spans," Dallas says of Vine. "Like for me, I can just sit there and watch little six-second clips all day. But for me to go watch a show and then watch commercials and stuff like that? I'd rather watch Vine than TV."

"Expelled" is basically a Ferris Bueller for the YouTube generation, with notorious prankster Felix (Dallas) trying to keep his parents in the dark about the fact that he's been kicked out of school. And it leaves plenty of opportunity for Dallas and Johns to make a case for themselves as film stars. It also serves as an early testing ground for whether the new wave of social media stars — who are popular with young viewers — can translate their YouTube, Vine and Instagram success into more traditional venues.

"It was very challenging to go from six seconds to a full-length, but we put a lot of hard work in and we did it," Dallas says of the film. "For a Vine, you're doing the whole shebang. You're the actor, director, you do everything. It was really fun for me to take the direction of what the director wanted and try and portray that."

CAMERON DALLAS AND MARCUS JOHNS
WIREIMAGE

Visit **Metro.us** to watch our exclusive video chat with Dallas.

NED EHRBAR
@Nedrick
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The year in TV

With so many new ways to watch TV and so many new channels trying out original content, it's easy to hit TV overload. It would be frustrating, if it weren't a sign of how much great TV there is to watch these days. In that spirit, we've collected a list of shows to honor for the things we liked about them, rather than a simple top five ranking. **LISA WEIDENFELD AND LAKSHMI GANDHI**

Show we'll miss the most

'The Colbert Report'

Nation, it's hard to believe that in just a few days we'll be saying goodbye to "Stephen Colbert" the jingoistic, America-loving right wing host of "The Colbert Report" — who's played, of course, by comedian Stephen Colbert. Since 2005, the show's loyal Colbert Nation has witnessed Colbert lampoon countless politicians and cable news pundits, profile many of those same politicians in his much-loved "Better Know A District" segment and lavish his beloved "Papa Bear" — talk show host Bill O'Reilly — with almost weekly praise. As Colbert leaves his "well-intentioned, poorly informed," character behind, it will be interesting to see how quickly his fans adjust to his non-satirical persona once his new CBS late-night show debuts in 2015.

SCOTT GRIES, PICTUREGROUP

Gone too soon

NICOLE WILDER, ABC

'Selfie'

For avid television watchers, it's always disappointing when a new show is cancelled just as it seems like it's finally hitting its stride. 2014's saddest cancellation casualty was surely the John Cho-Karen Gillan sitcom "Selfie." A modern-day twist on George Bernard Shaw's ugly duckling play "Pygmalion," the show followed a self-centered aspiring starlet (Gillan) who sees her growing social media fan base as her ticket to fame. Cho portrays the marketing exec trying to transform her into someone less self-absorbed. "Selfie" was pulled from the air in November after just six episodes. Fans did get one early holiday gifts of sorts from ABC — the remaining episodes have been put on Hulu.

Best talk show guest

Emma Stone, 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon'

We decided not to just honor best talk show this year, because when we thought about it, there was one main thing that happened on a talk show this year that we watched over and over again: Emma Stone tearing the roof off with her lip sync renditions of Blues Traveler's "Hook" and DJ Khaled's "All I Do Is Win." While Fallon's other guests have acquitted themselves well in the competition, we're pretty sure it's Stone's efforts that inspired Fallon to create a spinoff show just for lip syncing.

GETTY IMAGES

Best guest stars

JOJO WHILDEN, NETFLIX

'Orange is the New Black'

Maybe this one is cheating, since the Netflix drama (comedy? dramedy?) calls various cast members that you probably consider regulars "guest stars," but we had to recognize show creator Jenji Kohan and her casting crew for their impeccable work finding little-known actresses who regularly knock it out of the park as the various inmates on the show. Laverne Cox (Sophia), Natasha Lyonne (Nichols) and Uzo Aduba (Crazy Eyes)? All nominated for Emmy guest star spots in 2014, and vital parts of what makes the show so great.

Best new show

'Transparent'

Amazon has been creating original programming for some time now, but they finally hit the jackpot with "Transparent," from former "Six Feet Under" writer Jill Soloway. It's a sitcom, in the sense that it's a half hour long and it's funny, but it can also be heartbreaking. The show tells the story of Maura, or, as her family knows her, Mort, who comes out as a transgender woman late in life. Jeffrey Tambor is fantastic in the lead role, and Amy Landecker, Jay Duplass and Gaby Hoffman are compelling as Maura's kids, who are working through their own issues.

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Are you or your loved ones people who have trouble relaxing? Is it because you've never been to Half Moon in Montego Bay, Jamaica? It might be.

Sure, when you first get there after a few hours of being cooped up in an airplane, you might still be feeling tense. But then they'll offer you a glass of fresh juice (alcoholic if you prefer). Next you'll head to your room, which probably faces the ocean, and order a little jerk chicken to eat on your porch while you watch the waves. At that point, it's pretty much impossible not to feel some tension drain.

The 400-acre Half Moon is one of the oldest resorts in the country. People have been vacationing there since the 1950s, and the resort offers a variety of accommodations, from suites facing the two-mile-long private beach (shaped like a half moon, thus giving the resort its name) to villas with five to seven rooms that come with their own cook, housekeeper and butler, plus a private pool.

Things to do

If you get tired of sunning on the beach, unlikely as that seems, the resort also offers tennis lessons led by infinitely forgiving instructors, who will politely lie to you about how much your backhand is improving after you hit every ball into the net.

There's also an 18-hole golf course onsite (the flattest course in Jamaica) if that's more your speed.

Ocean-side relaxation

But the biggest don't-miss is probably the signature massage experience, offered at the Fern Tree spa, a massive indoor/outdoor space offering a range of services.

Make sure to go for one of the sessions that takes place in a bungalow over the sea. You know those wave sound effects that usually get played during a massage? Try listening to the real thing, since the bungalows only have three walls, all facing the beach. The fourth wall is open to the ocean.

Picture it: This is the building, right over the water, where you could be getting a massage.

The cooks at the villas make out-of-this-world meals.

Resort chic

Dress code

If you're not lucky enough to have a private cook whipping up dishes in your villa, meals can be had at a variety of spots. The main dining area is Seagrape Terrace. It's open to the water, like much of what you'll find at Half Moon. The Sugar Mill is the most expensive and chic spot.

Be prepared, though: The resort takes seriously its casual elegance dress code, and Sugar Mill is a place to show off your finest while eating like a king. This is not the sort of restaurant where you throw a cover up over your swimsuit and walk with sandy feet into the dining area.

Royalty

Famous guests

The resort has long played host to bold-faced names. Jackie Kennedy once wrote a will while she vacationed with John, and the Queen stopped by a few years ago.

Prince Harry also rented out one of the villas for a visit in 2012, but alas, we were assured that nothing scandalous occurred.

LIVE LIKE ROYALTY IN THE VILLA PRINCE HARRY RENTED IN 2012.

LISA WEIDENFELD
@LisaWeidenfeld
lisa.weidenfeld@metro.us

PLUS

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Best layovers

WalletHub ranked the best cities to fly out of on the way to your vacation destination this winter, based on airfare, flight times, the number of flight connections, hotel costs and a few other factors.

Top departure points for travel in the U.S.:

1. Atlanta, Georgia, and Salt Lake City, Utah (tied)
2. Charlotte, North Carolina, metropolitan area
3. Phoenix, Arizona, metro area
4. Denver, Colorado

Top departure points for traveling to another country:

1. Miami, Florida
2. Atlanta, Georgia
3. Washington, D.C.
4. Charlotte, North Carolina, metro area
5. Minneapolis–Saint Paul, Minnesota, metro area

Best kids' books of 2014

As study after study has shown, reading to your kids has benefits that extend past childhood and into the adult years. But with thousands of children's books being published each year, it can be tough to know which ones are truly worth buying. Parents magazine enlisted librarians, families and their editors to narrow it down to 10. Here, we share four of their picks. See the full list in Parents magazine's December issue. **EMILY LAURENCE**

'Have You Seen My Dragon?'

by Steve Light
This book makes learning to count interactive by incorporating a game of hide-and-seek into the pages. A little boy loses his dragon and must count up to 20 lanterns while searching for him all over the city. **$11.39, Barnes and Noble**

'The Mitten: A Classic Pop-Up Folktale'

by Jessica Southwick, Pippa Cornick and Yevgeniya Yereyskaya
The beautiful visuals, both in the form of pop-ups and colorful illustrations, make this book a winner — and a great gift if you are still hunting. The pull-outs have wheels and other actionable traits, which gives your little one something to do as you recount this old Ukrainian folktale. **$14.36, Amazon**

'Space Taxi'

by Wendy Mass and Michael Brawer, illustrated by Elise Gravel
The newest chapter book series for children ages five to eight is about an 8-year-old named Archie who learns that his taxi-cab driving dad has a secret: He's no ordinary cab driver. In reality, he shuttles aliens around the universe. Each book is a new adventure with plenty of real facts about the solar system snuck in. **$5.49, Barnes & Noble**

'A Snicker of Magic'

by Natalie Lloyd
Author Natalie Lloyd really lets readers' imaginations run wild with this chapter book for kids ages eight and older. In it 12-year-old Felicity moves to a town that lost its magic and is living under a curve. Felicity is a "word collector," and sees words other people can't. A bonus to the story being entertaining: your pre-teen will learn loads of new words. **$10.74, Amazon**

Holiday. Start a new family tradition with this Italian dessert

Eating a plate of homemade treats on Christmas Eve or after a long day of shopping has become a tradition for many families. And with the weather too windy and cold to play outside, baking with your kids can be a special way to spend the day.

Italian cafe Crave.it knows a lot about family traditions — and delicious treats. The New York City-based cafe specializes in Italian pastries, like warm apple and cream pocket croissants and apricot tarts.

The Crave.it team shares one of their beloved holiday recipes with us here. It just may inspire a new family tradition. EL

Visit **Metro.us** for Crave.it's Italian cookies recipe.

Recipe

These cake pops taste as good as they look. / PROVIDED

Ingredients
- Crumbs of a plain vanilla sponge cake
- 1 cup vanilla buttercream (ready to use)
- White chocolate (or milk or dark)
- Cake pops sticks
- Decorations (sprinkles, chocolate chips, edible bows)

Instructions

1 Mix the ingredients and divide using an ice cream scoop.
2 Roll each portion of the mix dough with your hands to create little balls.
3 Put them on a tray lined with parchment paper in the refrigerator for about 1 hour.
4 Melt the chocolate and dip the cake pop stick into the melted chocolate about 1 inch deep.
5 Put the sticks into the cake pop balls, let them set at room temperature.
6 Once they're set, immerse the cake pop into the melted chocolate and let it harden.
7 Decorate as you wish. Get creative and have fun!

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Horoscope

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21. It's important to stay one step ahead of the competition. Be fearless as you face challenges. The end result will be a revelation.

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20. Some of your confidential information will be divulged. As long as you can keep your financial matters a secret, you will land on your feet.

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18. You will be surprised by an unexpected gift, win or bargain. Making the right choice now will ensure that you end this year on a high.

♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20. Don't let personal matters get you down. Communication and group get-togethers will be complicated and frustrating.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20. Form a bond with someone who interests you romantically or professionally. Don't allow a minor setback to prematurely end a project.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21. You will gain greater insight into a situation developing behind the scenes. Medical matters are your responsibility. Don't entrust your information to a stranger.

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20. You should make changes that will raise your standard of living. A few adjustments may be all that is needed to improve your position.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22. Don't settle for the status quo. Changes are inevitable, and it's important to keep looking into ways to improve your current job or obtain a new one.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22. You will be in the limelight today. This is a great time to show off your leadership abilities. Take advantage of an offer.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22. Creativity and romance are highlighted. Dispense with your usual chores. Make your living space welcoming for the festive season.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22. You may feel unsettled, but if you are patient, things will turn in your favor. Being oversensitive will put you in a vulnerable position.

♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21. You can make extra money. This is a fine time to cement a deal that's in the works. You will receive wise advice from an older individual. EUGENIA LAST

Sudoku: Easy and hard

			9		3			
6		8		5	7			2
3	7							
	3			1	8		6	
	6	1				8	2	
	5		6	4			7	
							4	8
5			3	7		2		9
			5		2			

			1					9
	7			9		6	2	
2	3	9					8	
	4		5	6		8		
6								5
		5		7	4		3	
	2					5	6	3
	6	4		3			1	
7					2			

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Letters

The frankest discussion

Following recent grand jury decisions in Ferguson, Missouri, and Staten Island, New York, activists and average Americans are demanding, among other things, a discussion on race. I ask, for what? I remember well the robust, honest PBS program in 1992 moderated by Phil Donahue: "The Issue Is Race: A Crisis in Black and White." I was encouraged by the forum attended by Time magazine correspondent Sylvester Monroe, PBS journalist Tony Brown and Cornel West, then professor of religion and Afro-American Studies at Princeton, rapper/activist Sista Soulja and others. Unfortunately, the most profound statement of the two-hour discussion came from white activist educator Jonathon Kozol: "I heard this same debate 25 years ago."
LARRY D. FOWLER, VIA EMAIL

Goodbye, grand jury

One step in the right direction might be doing away with the grand jury system. If a district attorney thinks he has a case, indict the suspect. That way, ALL of the responsibility is placed squarely where it should be and not on a group of scapegoats whose decision is based solely on information the DA does — or doesn't — present to them.
BRUCE A. BENNETT, VIA EMAIL

letters@metro.us

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words. Metro reserves the right to edit all letters. Please include your name and contact info.

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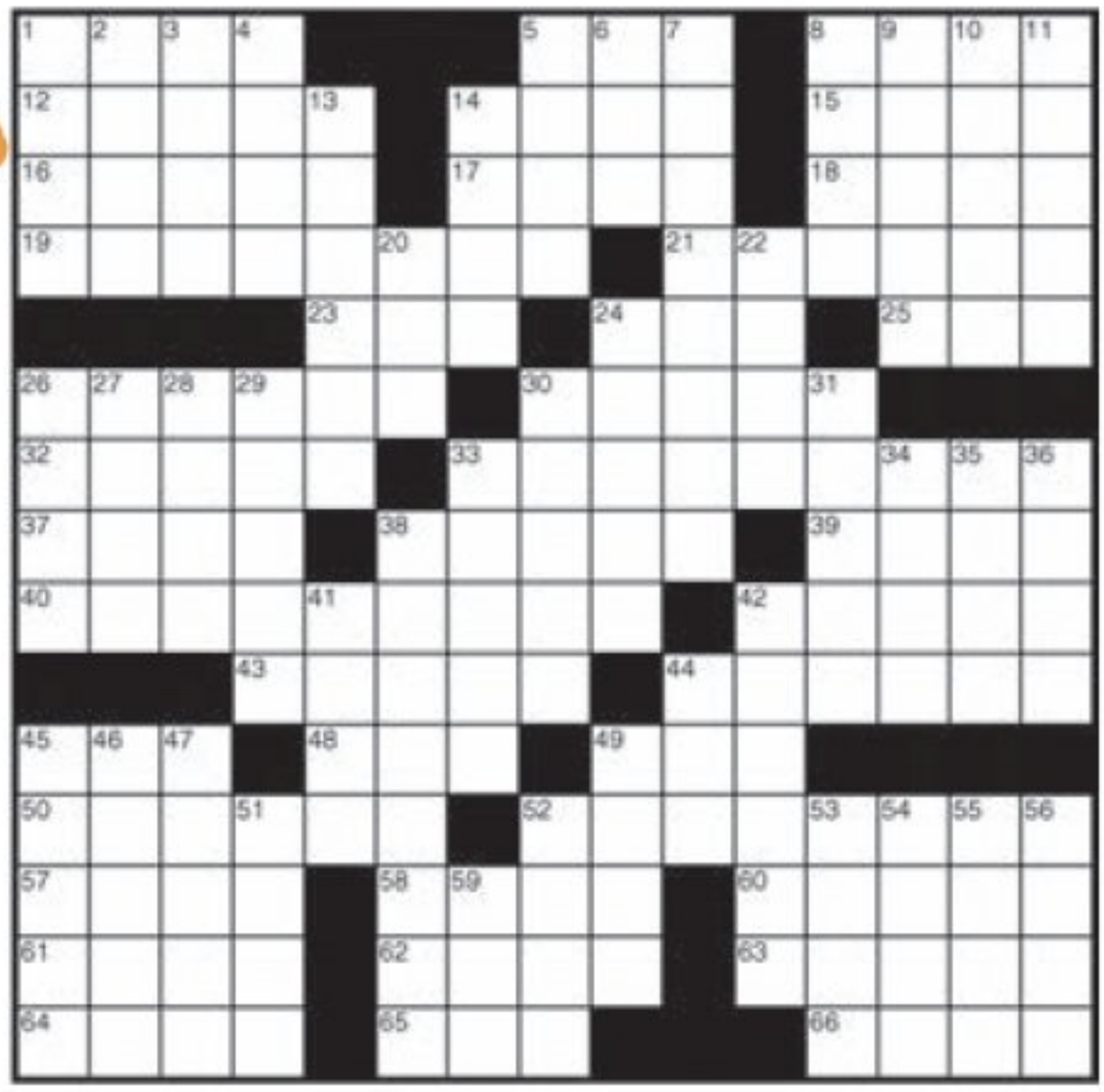
Crossword

Across
1 Ration out
5 Butter container
8 — Mawr
12 Iridescent gems
14 Laird's accent
15 Nautical greeting
16 Pigeonhole
17 Town near Lake Tahoe
18 London park
19 Pulls off
21 Destiny
23 TV brand
24 Desk item
25 Urban people-movers
26 Library user
30 Wall Street dread
32 Informed, slangily
33 Foxglove
37 Longish skirt
38 Kermit's color
39 Resist strongly
40 Night wear
42 Rabbit fur
43 Softball teams
44 Evolve
45 Crunch targets
48 — annum
49 Dinny's rider
50 Leave no trace
52 Office gadgets
57 Mr. Baldwin
58 Former Atlanta stadium
60 Unearthly
61 Ms. Dinesen
62 Cattle calls
63 Perry's secretary
64 Grande dame
65 Diminish
66 Market

Down
1 "— Lisa"
2 "Aeneid," for one
3 Muscle-car dial
4 Post-kindergarten
5 Wk. day
6 Footed vase
7 Like old jeans (2 wds.)
8 Words from Scrooge
9 Verse
10 Mountaineer's refrain
11 Putin's vetoes
13 Get mad (2 wds.)
14 La — tar pits
20 DVD predecessor
22 — — for the money
24 Errand runners
26 Mounties' org.
27 Newsman — Abel
28 BMW rival
29 Vouchsafe
30 Landing places
31 Henry — Lodge
33 Paint additive
34 Roman moon goddess
35 Cool rapper? (hyph.)
36 Hebrides island
38 Out of the office (2 wds.)
41 Barely beats
42 Held gently
44 Extinct bird
45 Do the trick
46 Ultralight wood
47 Slammin' Sammy —
49 Elevator guy
51 Yucky
52 Social climber
53 Dregs
54 Dashiell's peer
55 Little creek
56 Close
59 Crowd

Yesterday's answer



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Foles still hurt, Sanchez will start vs. Skins

NFL. Nick Foles will be out at least one more week recovering from his broken collarbone.

Following the Eagles' 38-27 loss to the Cowboys, quarterback Mark Sanchez said what every Birds fan was thinking.

"I'm better than that," Sanchez said. "I can only be accountable for myself and I know all the guys feel the same way I do. ... It starts with the quarterback. I have to be a lot better."

Reporters asked Sanchez if he expected to start against the Redskins next week with Nick Foles expected to, perhaps, be healthy enough to play after recovering from a broken collarbone.

"I have no idea," Sanchez said with a defeated look on his face, "but I need to clean up some mistakes and attack this thing like I do every week. That's with a positive attitude, learning from the previous week, learning from this game, and being ready to play."

Well, the diagnosis came Monday morning and was delivered by Chip Kelly during his daily press conference — for at least one more week, it will be Sanchez' offense to run.

Sanchez was at the helm for three of the Eagles five losses. He has thrown nine interceptions in seven games. But running back LeSean McCoy made sure not to throw his backup quarterback under the bus Sunday night after two costly interceptions sealed the game for Dallas.

"Yeah, we feel good about Mark," McCoy said. "I don't think this whole game is Mark's fault."

Does Kelly think Sanchez has been good enough to win during the Eagles' back-to-back losses?

"I think that we have to be more consistent overall," the coach said. "Mark will be the first person to tell you that. Everyone else will tell you that."

EVAN MACY
@evan_macy
evan.macy@metro.us

Sanchez will have another opportunity Sunday. / GETTY IMAGES

Trouble under center

Who has been better, Nick Foles or Mark Sanchez?

- **Foles:** 8 starts, 2,163 yards, 13 TD and 10 INT (81.4 QB rating)
- **Sanchez:** 7 games played, 1,752 yards, 10 TD and 9 INT (84.5 QB rating)

3 SPORTS

Clearwater fun

Union joining Phillies

According to Tampa reporter Edward Lawrence, the MLS' Union will be moving their training camp from Orlando to Clearwater and will practice just across the parking lot from Brighthouse Field. The Union are expected to start camp in February and will overlap with Phillies' spring training.

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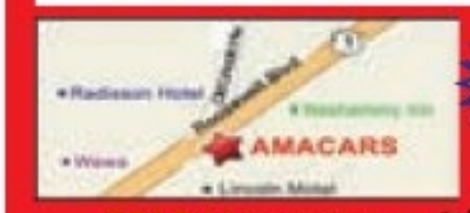

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NHL power rankings | by Rich Slate

No. 1

Ducks (21-6-5)

The Western Conference continues to separate itself from the Eastern Conference in terms of both quality of teams and its overall depth. The Ducks have the most points (47) in the league and they've won their last seven games. Corey Perry being out with a knee injury and their constant goaltending issues, so far, haven't been an impediment for the Ducks this season.

No. 2

'Hawks (21-9-1)

The Blackhawks lost, 3-2, at the Islanders on Saturday, snapping their NHL-best eight-game win streak. That didn't seem to bother Chicago too much, though, as it bounced back on Sunday with a 2-1 win over Calgary. The Blackhawks' goal-differential of plus-34 leads the league.

No. 3

Penguins (19-6-4)

What started out as something to laugh about has quickly turned into an epidemic as Sidney Crosby (nine goals, 26 assists) was diagnosed with the mumps this weekend. I shudder to imagine what would happen if a more mainstream star like LeBron James or Peyton Manning caught the mumps.

No. 4

Blues (20-8-2)

The Blues continue to play well, having won their last four games to remain only one point behind the Blackhawks in the Central Division (with one game in hand). Martin Brodeur (2-1-0) provided a spark to St. Louis, but it'll be interesting to see how its goaltending roles shake out.

No. 5

Lightning (19-9-3)

Tampa Bay has finally come back down to Earth a bit as it opened a key five-game road trip with a 4-2 loss at Washington on Saturday. The Lightning are only 7-5-2 on the road so this next week's road trip (at Penguins, Flyers, Devils and Islanders) should tell us if they're a complete team or not.

No. 6

Red Wings (17-7-7)

Few people thought that the Red Wings would be this good so far in 2014-15. Detroit is 6-2-2 in its last 10 games and its record is more impressive when you consider that it is 1-5 in overtime and shootouts. The Red Wings' next four games are in Motown, where they are 11-3-4.

No. 7

Preds (19-8-2)

The Predators dropped to third in the Central, not because they've struggled but rather the fact that the Blackhawks and Blues have both been on serious rolls. Nashville has allowed an NHL-low 57 goals thanks to the incomparable Pekka Rinne (19-6-1, .937 save percentage, 1.75 GAA).

MLB. Hamels says he wants to play for a contender again

ARE HAMELS' DAYS IN RED PINSTRIPES NUMBERED?
GETTY IMAGES

There have been Cole Hamels trade rumors for a while now. And the reports continue to come back with musings about the Phillies asking for too much in return, or saying Hamels wants to stay put in Philly.

But during an interview this weekend on SiriusXM's MLB Network Radio, it almost sounded like Hamels now expects to be traded to a contender.

"It's unfortunate, but all great teams have that season or drought for a couple of years and then they start to rebuild," Hamels said.

He continued, "It's something, where if [a trade] does happen, I completely understand. Hopefully there will be a time when I can come back before my career is over. But, at the same time, it's a business. It's baseball."

So not only is he ready to be traded and "go to a team that wants to win," as he also said on air, but he hopes after he is traded he can one day come back to Philly. Jumping the gun a bit, perhaps?

The 30-year old told radio listeners that "winning trumps everything," implying pretty sternly that Hamels intends to waive his 21-team limited no-trade clause. The slow demise of the Phillies' NL East powerhouse was something Hamels said he and his teammates saw coming. And now that it's finally over, Hamels is ready to be a part of a new powerhouse. EVAN MACY

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BEING AN EAGLES FAN IS CURSE, NOT BLESSING

The caller's name was Carl, and he was speaking for thousands of Eagles fans yesterday when he fought back tears after the 38-27 loss to Dallas on Sunday night.

"I'm 53 years old," he sobbed on my WIP radio show. "This is crazy."

And yet it is a life we have chosen for ourselves, this preoccupation with the exploits of a football franchise that has not produced a champion for 54 years, and will fail to do so again this season. Being an Eagles fan can be a blessing; far more often, it is a curse.

The worst part about the current state of these Birds is that they promised more than we had a right to expect until just a couple of weeks ago. In coach Chip Kelly's second season, the roster holes from the Andy Reid era are still formidable, the talent still glaringly deficient.

As the Eagles learned on Sunday night, their cornerbacks are neither skilled enough nor smart enough to compete at the highest levels. Dallas wide receiver Dez Bryant torched Bradley Fletcher for three touchdowns. Cary Williams amassed 60 yards in penalties on the other side of the field. They were the two biggest reasons for the loss.

Mark Sanchez is not a starting quarterback in the NFL. If you still doubt that conclusion, feel free to review the tape of his critical mistake on an easy throw over the middle to tight end Zach Ertz in the fourth quarter that led to a fatal interception. Sanchez is far better at talking about the game than actually playing it. The other villains in the worst loss of the season are too many to list here. It's easier to point out the players who deserved a better fate: Fletcher Cox, Brandon Graham, Chris Polk, Evan Mathis. That's it. No other Eagles, and definitely none of the coaches, were worthy of praise.

Chip Kelly usually blames himself after a loss, and yesterday was no exception. His team didn't respond well to an opening kickoff snafu, they didn't adjust effectively to Bryant's heroics, and they couldn't get off the field defensively on third downs. They didn't play like a division winner, and now they probably won't be.

What I wanted to know from Kelly on Monday was whether he deals with losses in the same emotional way the fans do. After all, Kelly's life is football. He is not married, has no kids. He is defined by the success of his football team. Does a loss like the Dallas game stay with him the way it does with the fans?

"There's another game to play," he said. "We've got to worry about Washington now."

Unfortunately, it's not as easy for Eagles fans. A caller named Carl was driving with tears in his eyes yesterday, trying to figure out why a loss like this hurts so much. Carl said it best. This is crazy.

The Eagles' 21-point comeback wasn't enough Sunday. / GETTY IMAGES

Cataldi's final thought

"This Dallas game is going to stay with us for a long time."

The voice of Philly sports

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Cataldi's idle thoughts

- After trading Jimmy Rollins to the Dodgers for two mediocre prospects, Phillies GM Ruben Amaro said he probably waited too long to break up the core of the 2008 champions. Amaro has been in charge of personnel for seven years, and he just figured this out. The fans knew three years ago.
- New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie was sharing high-fives in the luxury box of Cowboys owner Jerry Jones during the Dallas win over the Eagles on Sunday night. Does Christie really believe his love for the Cowboys is going to help get him elected president? Here's a better question: Doesn't he know it's going to hurt?
- When the Sixers won two of three games last week, GM Sam Hinkie sprung into action. He traded Brandon Davies to Brooklyn at halftime of a game against Atlanta. Mission accomplished. The Sixers lost that contest, then blew an 18-point lead in the fourth quarter against Memphis. Sam Hinkie, the king of tankers.

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